

## Item # 7: Wilderness Experience

**Evaluation Objectives:** To evaluate whether a high level of wilderness experience is being maintained.

**Methods:** Reviewed Flathead National Forest targets of areas within the wilderness being managed to standard, with specific reference to the Chief's 10 year Wilderness Challenge. This system of managing a wilderness to standard started in 2005. The management system consists of 100 possible points and a minimum of 60 points is necessary to claim a target of managed to standard. A review of the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) has been conducted. Input was reviewed from the wilderness ranger partnership staff and district ranger staff for the Mission Mountains Wilderness regarding campsite monitoring data.

**Evaluation:** Wilderness in 2005-2007 managed to standard.

**Table 7-1.** Scores for each wilderness on the Flathead NF for years 2005-2007

Wilderness Name	2005	2006	2007
Bob Marshall Complex	68	63	63
Great Bear	58	53	63
Mission Mountains	44	50	58

An air quality plan was completed for the Great Bear Wilderness in 2007 which added points and contributed to the Great Bear meeting the standard in 2007. The Mission Mountains have worked on several aspects of the Wilderness Challenge, including an improved education plan, campsite monitoring and data input and storage, and additional workforce.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) is comprised of the Great Bear, Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness areas. BMWC have been monitoring for 20 years (four 5-year periods). Monitoring to standard has been difficult due to declining budgets and large fires. Increased use in some areas of the wilderness has caused increases in both social and resource impacts. Impacts include a few high use areas and close-in destinations, such as lakes or first day campsites for stock parties.

The preferred management response in the Complex to social and resource impacts are education and visitor contact for all resource areas and opportunity classes. Site rehabilitation is used to address resource impacts, and decrease the impact rating and bring a site to standard. In some areas site naturalization is used to achieve a non-discernable impact rating and reduce the number of sites in the area.

**Recommended Action:** Continue to implement the Chief's 10 year Wilderness Challenge, striving to improve the scores and the wilderness condition and users experience. Continue to monitor and implement BMWC and Mission Mountains LAC direction.